

MINUTES  
Housing Authority of the Town of Darien  
October 26, 2010

A Special Meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Town of Darien was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 26, 2010 in Room 119 of the Darien Town Hall.

Present were: Commissioners Jennifer Schwartz, Jan Raymond and Kass Bruno; (Absent – Commissioners Cynthia Ashburne and Joe Warren; Executive Director Kathryn Molgano). Invited guests were Arthur Anderson, Lou Trajcevski of Newcastle Housing Ventures, and Anthony Gaglio and representatives from Viking Construction.

Minutes from the Special Meeting of September 28, 2010 were approved without objection.

Paid Bills Reports for MR36 and E187 for October 2010 were approved on a motion by Jan Raymond.

Redevelopment Update: Commissioner Schwartz began by discussing the DHA's 2009 LIHTC application, and the fact that due to the timing of the zoning approval and submission of that application, the DHA did not rank highly for cost effectiveness. The DHA's 2010 LIHTC application did pass the underwriting criteria and ranked 7<sup>th</sup>. Only 4 projects were awarded tax credits and financing in 2010 by CHFA, and the DHA's application for AON did get the full 20 points for "cost-effectiveness". There will be no ITA first mortgage funds in 2010 or 2011; hence the DHA will again pursue an FHA insured loan for its 2011 LIHTC application.

The DHA plans to pursue a tax abatement agreement with the Town of Darien, and a meeting with the Board of Selectmen is being set. A tax abatement agreement would increase the leveraging power and yield more proceeds, which will be applied to construction costs and relocation expenses. Arthur Anderson and Lou Trajcevski stated that the tax credit market has shown an increase in pricing. Relocation planning will begin closer to when funding closing.

The discussion continued about value engineering and what building materials were being considered to cut or added in. Eight foot ceilings to house high efficiency oil burners, 15-year hardy plank siding, balconies, patios, vinyl tile in wet areas, CHFA standard appliances, all stainless sinks, HUD severe-use cabinets with pressure treated toe kicks and solid wood, one piece acrylic tubs. An estimated \$1.1 million in construction contingencies would be applied to improving building materials if no issues arise during initial site work. Upgrades could include better grade windows, ceramic tile on the bathroom walls, and landscaping. The goal is to spend the construction contingency on add on's and upgrades.

Viking invited the Commissioners and anyone who is interested to tour other affordable housing projects they are working on in Stamford: Fairfield Court, Vidal Court and Palmer's Square, are all in progress and can be toured at any time.

The new QAP for 2011 from CHFA is not out yet. The new QAP will redefine categories in which the AON project could score points toward achieving an allocation of tax credits. One category that the DHA expects to be added is tax abatement, whereby the project could earn a point should the Town grant a tax abatement that qualifies under the new QAP. Lou Trajcevski stated that it was anticipated that more tax credits would be available for projects in 2011.

Commissioner Schwartz reported that the RTM voted to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into a quick claim deed to convey Allen-O'Neill Drive to the DHA upon receipt of confirmation of funding and when building permits are issued. Commissioner Schwartz thanked everyone who supported the vote.

Commissioner Report on Completed and Ongoing Projects: Commissioner Raymond read her report (attached herein) into the record that summarizes the progress and improvements made to DHA properties since 2007.

Allen-O'Neill Resident Association: No report

Senior Resident Association: No report

On a motion by Jan Raymond, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Schwartz  
Chairman

km

DARIEN HOUSING AUTHORITY  
Activities and accomplishments of the current DHA

## OLD TOWN HALL HOUSES

An early concern of the current commissioners was the state of OTHH. A tour taken by commissioners Schwartz and Raymond with our DHA staff at the beginning of our tenure revealed the fact that improvements needed to be made. Our fellow commissioners and the director were in full agreement. Since then, the DHA has accomplished the following:

1. We have repainted all of the exterior woodwork
2. All the lattice has been repaired and replaced
3. We have added exterior lighting
4. In co-operation with the town Monuments and Ceremonies committee, we have repaired the flagpole. The names of the town's war dead from WWI, WWII and Korea are listed on the flag pole.
5. We have landscaped around the community room.
6. We have painted fire lanes
7. We have added and repaired benches in order to provide more outdoor seating and safer seating for our residents
8. We have added parking signs and traffic gates
9. We have re-graded and repaired interior walkways
10. We added emergency lights in the community room
11. We have been replacing windows
12. We have replaced the fire alarm panel

In 2008, DHA's director brought to our attention the fact that the OTHH units had not been renovated since they were built about 23 years ago. We knew that the original units were not built with top quality materials and the many parts of the apartments needed updating. Since that time we have renovated 8 of our 30 apartments. Included in the renovations are the following:

- a. replacement and repair of flooring
- b. replacement of fixtures and heat registers
- c. replacement of thermostats with upgraded thermostats
- d. installed ceramic tile flooring in bathrooms (replacing old vinyl tiles)
- e. installed new bathroom vanities and cabinetry
- f. addition of grab bars and handrails where necessary
- g. ongoing replacement of bathroom fans
- h. replacement of kitchen appliances with more energy efficient appliances is ongoing
- i. installed new kitchen countertops and new kitchen cabinets
- j. installed wall-to-wall carpeting in bedrooms and living rooms
- k. upgrading of handicap accessible unit
- l. replacement of the drains at building #3 at a cost of \$12,000

New roofs were put on OTHH with the help of a CHFA 1-1 grant . Sen Bob Duff was helpful in getting this grant. Roofing was completed in 2008.  
We continue to look for grant money.

Going forward we know that we will need to repair/replace the driveway. Preliminary estimates have come in higher than we might have hoped but as we get other projects behind us we will look forward to this job.

We continue to work to with CL&P. We have requested that we be one of the housing projects that they evaluate for energy efficiency.

On another topic, we have invested in new office equipment in our office. It has also recently been repainted and recarpeted.

## ALLEN-O'NEILL HOUSES

Over the past years, the public has paid a lot of attention to the proposed re-development of AON so it is doubly important to look at what else has been going on at that site.

The largest ongoing issue at AON is the condition of the furnaces. As we began our tenure as a commission, we learned that while the furnaces at AON were replaced many had faulty heat exchangers. AON settled a suit with York and as part of that settlement received the 4 remaining available heat exchangers. (Is York out of business?) We used the last exchanger last winter. This means that in the future, we will need to cannibalize heating units in vacant houses if we have other failures. The only other solution would be to invest in new heating units at cost of \$6-\$7,000 per home.

Additional ongoing problems with the houses include plumbing issues. Ten years ago, many of the houses received new tub surrounds. In some instances they were not properly reconnected to the plumbing. This has resulted in having three of these baths rot out. In addition we have had to replace some underground plumbing. These 3 units have been repaired at considerable cost. We can expect to have continued issues with other houses.

We also have a number of homes with windows that were not properly installed. This has resulted in a lot of rot. Replacement of windows is both expensive and impractical since much of the window surrounds are not conducive to receiving new windows

A problem that tenants in the houses face is the high cost of heat. The houses are not well insulated. For some tenants, heating costs can be almost as much as the rent.

Going forward DHA has to deal with all of the above problems. We are committed to providing our tenants with the best housing we can given the difficulties we have to deal with.